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governance, technology

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Download the paper: [“Paper: Monterey County, California Next Generation Radio Project”](#)

Michael Aspland did not have to search very far for a topic to research for his paper in Technology for Homeland Security.

Aspland, assistant chief with the Monterey (Calif.) Police Department, wrote a case study on an already existing effort by first-responder agencies in Monterey County to update a unified data and radio system.

The paper examined the technical requirements for a new system as well as the governance challenges in developing and operating it. The latter is no small feat as agencies from 12 cities within the county, as well as county agencies, will share the new radio system.

“My research was oriented on how shared governance impacts a successful technology system,” he said.

Aspland’s course paper served as a springboard for his thesis topic on the same issue, titled “Interoperable Communications Systems: Governance and Risk.”

1) Aspland’s paper centered on case studies of Marin (Calif.) County and Monterey County, both of which were in the process of developing and building updated countywide emergency radio systems. One planning guideline by the Department of Homeland Safety for updated radio systems under its SAFECOM program is governance. Building the governance component involves what Aspland calls “time and grind.” That involves face-to-face interaction in determining how each agency fits into the interoperable system as well as simply building relationships for building the system and continued governance of it.

On the technical side, the Federal Communications Commission in 2004 mandated local public safety agencies narrowband all voice and data radio frequencies by 2013.

2) In writing the paper, Aspland said he gained a better appreciation of the importance of shared governance.

“Early on, we understood what the technology was; that’s the easier part of these projects,” he said. “The challenging part is, ‘how do you share leadership responsibilities?’”

Furthermore, within that shared structure different participants assume leadership roles depending on the stage of the project. Early in the effort, Monterey County’s Information Technology Department took the lead in establishing the parameters of the system’s requirements. Now that negotiations are under way with a vendor to design and build the system, end-users of the communications system are taking the lead in the project.

An added benefit is that once those relationships were established in working on the radio project, the agencies have found other ways to share services in the form of combined fire and law enforcement services

“We’re beginning to leverage those relationships in other areas,” Aspland said.

3) In the time since Aspland wrote his paper, negotiations have begun with a potential vendor to build the system. The project is on track to be completed by January

Associated file: [Paper: Monterey County, California Next Generation Radio Project](#)

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